

Message Text

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EXDIS

JOINT EMBASSY/UNC MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR MOPS US KS KN PBOR PFOR

SUBJECT: COMMANDER NAVAL FORCES KOREA CONVERSATION WITH ROK CNO
ON YELLOW SEA INCIDENT

REF: STATE 46187

1. FOLLOWING IS CNFK REPORT OF CONVERSATION HE HELD WITH
ROK CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS ADMIRAL HWANG CHONG-YON
ON MARCH 4:

2. "AMONG THE OTHER ACTORS WHICH MUST BE IN THE MIND OF
A UNC COMMANDER IS WHETHER A COURSE OF ACTION SELECTED IS
A SUFFICIENTLY CREDIBLE DEFENSIVE ACTION SO THAT THE ROK
WILL RETAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE THAT THE UNC OPCON IS
EFFECTIVE FOR THEIR DEFENSE, AND THUS WILL NOT BE DRAWN
TOWARD A UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES FROM OPCON,
WHICH WOULD CREATE SERIOUS PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY IN THE
CASE OF THE NAVY.

3. IN DOING HIS USUAL AFTER-ACTION RESEARCH INTO ROK
REACTIONS, CNFK DISCUSSED THESE MATTERS WITH ROKN CNO,

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ADMIRAL HWANG. THE FOLLOWING SALIENT POINTS EMERGED:

A. ON 26 FEB , ADM HWANG RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO RECOMMEND TO CNFK OPENING FIRE OR SIMILARLY VIOLENT ACTION AGAINST THE NK FISHERY PATROL BOATS. (THIS IS NOTHING NEW, SINCE ALMOST ALL JCS/MND PERSONNEL ARE ARMY AND TEND TO VIEW THE NORTHERN EDGE OF THE PATROL AREAS AS ANALOGOUS TO DMZ.)

B. SINCE ROKN CNO'S VIEW OF WHAT WAS PERMISSIBLE AND ADVISABLE COINCIDED WITH CNFK'S HE ALSO WAS CONFRONTING ESSENTIALLY THE PROBLEM DISCUSSED IN PARAGRAPH ONE.

C. HIS CONCLUSION, INDEPENDENT OF CNFK, WAS THAT TO ATTEMPT TO BOARD THE PATROL BOATS AND BRING THEM IN USING MINIMUM FORCE WAS THE LOWEST LEVEL OF ACTION ACCEPTABLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. SINCE HE THEN BECAME AWARE OF CNFK IDENTICAL DIRECTION, HE MADE NO RECOMMENDATION TO CNFK.

D. THERE WAS A SUBSEQUENT MEETING AT THE BLUE HOUSE AM, 27 FEB, ATTENDED BY ALL CONCERNED ON THE ROK SIDE. AFTER A FULL BRIEFING, PRESIDENT PARK CONCLUDED THAT THE NAVY ACTION TAKEN WAS PROPER, BUT ALSO STATED THAT IN FUTURE, WHEN FISHING BOATS WERE INVOLVED, THE ACTION SHOULD BE TO HERD THEM BACK ON THEIR SIDE OF THE LINE, RATHER THAN STRONGER RESPONSE.

4. BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE WITH ADM HWANG,CNFK IS CONFIDENT THIS IS ACCURATE REPORT OF PRESIDENT PARK'S REACTION. IT IS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT AS AN INDICATOR OF UNDERSTANDING OF SEA SITUATION AND RESTRAINT ON PART OF PRESIDENT. IN OPINION OF CNFK, NK FISHING BVTS, AS DISTINCT FROM PATROL CRAFT,WILL RETIRE WHEN APPROACHED BY NAVAL VESSELS OF SUBSTANTIAL FORCE, SO THAT SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE FEASIBLE."

5. ON SAME DAY ADMIRAL HWANG AND CNFK CONVERSATION, ROKAF CHIEF OF STAFF CHU YONG-BOK TOLD AMBASSADOR HE ALSO WAS UNDER GREAT DEAL OF ROK ARMY PRESSURE TO ESCALATE THE FEB 26 INCIDENT. CHU SAID HE HAD RESISTED THIS HOWEVER,
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